

SUNDAY 32B (2021)

A) MY BROTHER'S PRESENT

One Christmas, when we were children, my younger brother Tony gave me the present of a handkerchief  
This was not the most exciting Christmas present I had ever received

But why it was important was that it was the first present he had bought and paid for out of his own pocket-money  
Pocket money was scarce in those days, and so his kindness moved me very much, and I have never forgotten it

We can all think of presents we have been given, of very little value in themselves, but which mean a lot to us because of the person who gave it.

B) WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH

A pagan woman, from Zarephath (in what is now Lebanon), is reduced to poverty by drought and famine.

At the request of the prophet Elijah, she gives him **water** to drink, and also the very last **bread** she had been able to bake.

**Great faith, great generosity.**

C) WIDOW'S MITE

Jesus draws attention of his disciples to something he notices  
He was watching all the rich people putting money into the Temple treasury.

Among them is a poor widow, whose contribution, two small coins, is quite insignificant compared to the contributions of the rich.  
But Jesus says, THIS POOR WIDOW HAS PUT MORE IN THAN ALL THE OTHERS: FOR THEY HAVE ALL PUT IN MONEY THEY HAD OVER, BUT SHE HAS PUT IN EVERYTHING SHE POSSESSED, ALL SHE HAD TO LIVE ON.

So God does not measure our gifts in terms of **quantity**, but in terms of **quality**: what were the circumstances? what was the motivation of the heart?

The widow's gift was far greater than that of the others because it was **an expression of her whole self, her whole life.**

Perhaps she overheard what Jesus was saying about her.

**Great faith, great generosity.**

#### D) OUR OFFERING IN THE MASS

Something similar happens every time we celebrate Mass. Gifts of bread and wine (and money too) are brought from the congregation to the altar. They represent all of us, our whole selves, our whole lives. Bread and wine are food and drink: they **sustain life**. They are produced by the work of human hands. Money too is the fruit of our labour, so this too **represents our work**

So the offerings are symbols of everything we want to bring to the Mass, everything we have experienced in the past week, and everything that lies ahead of us in the week to come.

#### E) OUR OFFERING TRANSFORMED

During Preparation of Gifts, priest adds drop of water to the wine in the chalice.

Drop of water **represents ourselves and all we bring to the Mass**. Water is insignificant, in quantity and quality when compared to wine.

In the chalice, the drop of water is totally taken over by the wine.

Together they are **transformed** into the Blood of Christ

In same way, our offering, even though it may seem weak and poor and insignificant, is absorbed in the offering of Jesus himself. What seems poor and weak and insignificant **suddenly acquires infinite value**.

What we celebrate and make present on the altar is nothing less than the offering of Christ himself to the Father

In that offering, he gave his whole self; he held nothing back

It became the greatest **act of love and praise the world has ever known**.

And Jesus takes everything that we bring, everything that we have and are, and makes it a part of that offering.

#### F) CONCLUSION

My brother and his gift of the handkerchief, the widow's gift of food or of two small coins, all show that what really matters is **not the object in itself, but what it signifies**; what it tells us about the **love and faith and trust and generosity of the person who makes the gift**.

The Mass is a celebration of the love and faith and trust and generosity of Christ himself.

And we are invited live out that generosity in our daily lives, knowing that our every effort, whether small or great, is accepted and transformed by Christ himself.